

# FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S,  
MARITZBURG,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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FOURTH SERIES: N<sup>OS</sup>. 1 TO 4.

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## A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, September 2, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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JER. v. 30, 31.—*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land! The Prophets prophecy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and My People love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?*

THE descriptions, which the Prophets of Israel have given of the depravity of human nature in their times, of the many ways in which it has fallen, the corruptions to which it has been liable, are always true. What happened in the days of old is repeated still. To "fall away from God,"—to fall short of that which His holy laws, the reflection of His own Holiness require of His creature,—is to become the victim of all kinds of lower influences, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life." The very things which in their place are good and holy,—our natural affections and instincts, — yet when displaced from their true position, when suffered to control the will, instead of being guided and controlled by it, become the sources of all manner of evil, destructive of the individual, destructive of the State.

The whole of this chapter should be studied to show us what was the moral state of this highly favored, this chosen, people, at the time when the prophet wrote.

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth."

Injustice, lying, perjury, stubbornness, obstinate persistence in their evil courses, these are the charges which the

Prophet first brings against his fellow-countrymen. The common people, he says, were foolish and ignorant; they had "altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds"; he will—

"go to the great men and speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God."

But were they any better? The greater the blessings these had received, the greater were their sins.

"Thy children have forsaken Me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses."

Idolatry, adultery, uncleanness, an utter disregard for God's Presence and contempt for God's Judgments, these were the general characteristics of the times. There was no gratitude for mercies past, no humble dependence for the time to come, no recognition of a Divine Providence overlooking and overruling the affairs of men.

"This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit; therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked; they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not any soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Is the account which is here given us so very unlike that which may be given of the moral state even of Christendom, even of countries where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, that we fail to recognize it as in any way applicable to our own times? Is it a thing of the past alone, a fossil specimen, as it were, disinterred out of the memorials of a by gone age? We might be tempted to despair, especially after reading in the newspapers the facts of the history of the day—we might be tempted, I say, to despair, when we find murders, adulteries, cruelty and oppression, extortion and fraud, still rife even in Christian England, and the wholesale horrors of war still perpetrated by nations, who recognize, each in their own way, in their national creed, the Prince of Peace as supreme over the kings of the earth. Were a visitor from another planet to drop suddenly among us, and to take up his abode for a few months with one of the clergy of London, and then put on paper his thoughts as to the effect of Christian teaching on a civilized community, from the outward evidences which met his eye, as he walked by day or by night in the innumerable lanes and courts and

alleys, where live the masses of that great community, he would probably find enough of drunkenness and vice, enough of all forms of wretchedness, enough of selfish extravagance on the one hand, and of degraded ignorance and misery on the other, to make him doubt the efficacy, not merely of the Christian Ministry, but of all educational efforts, of all measures of social improvement, upon the population of our great metropolis.

But *we* must not yield to the temptation to despair. We must remember that the whole is far too vast for our limited vision. It needs the Infinite Patience of God to bear all the burden not of one small Syrian tribe only, but of the whole human race. We must take refuge in our own ignorance against our own impatience. It *seems* as if the knowledge of God so largely vouchsafed to this generation had not issued in that moral culture, that firmness of principle, that purity of life, which ought to have been the fruits of it. Yet we greatly, perhaps, over estimate the extent to which that knowledge really penetrates even in a community like ours. For words, though the chief medium for imparting true knowledge, are but an imperfect means of conveying it. And men may have a large acquaintance with the mere formulas in which great truths are expressed, truths in their nature saving, renewing, regenerating to the human spirit, they may be very conversant with texts and creeds, and yet may have but little real acquaintance with the truths themselves. One falsehood even, mixed with a creed, may overshadow and neutralise very much of the truth with which it is blended. The truths—the vital truths—of Christianity, even as they have been imparted to the human race through men chosen of God, elect spirits, higher, purer, and therefore also humbler than the rest, have remained but half realised by multitudes, but a dead letter to the unprepared, worldly, perverted, polluted heart. A “little flock” at first received them, who walked in a “narrow way.” But that little flock has increased in a wonderful manner; and, though the world looks still so unChristian, so antiChristian, yet that has increased, and is increasing still, and we hope, we trust, we earnestly believe, shall still increase, until all evil shall be expelled before it, *crowded out*, as it were, from God’s world,—not put down by strength of hand and violence, which never taught one truth or permanently destroyed one evil, but vanquished because, where light is,

darkness cannot be, nor, where love reigns, cruelty, nor injustice where righteousness is a very present power.

But we have heard how the Prophet ascribes the moral corruption of Israel to their having forsaken and forgotten God, and "sworn by them that are no gods." We had occasion once before lately to consider at some length the idolatrous practices which even in Jeremiah's days prevailed in Israel, as we gather from his prophecies and from the second Book of Kings, and which far exceeded in horrible monstrosity anything which is generally conceived as to the doings of the chosen people. The ordinary notion, I suppose, which exists of the Jews of those days in the minds of most religionists, who read the Bible or hear it read continually, without giving themselves the trouble to consider what the words really mean, and picture to themselves the actual state of things in the Holy City, would be that of a religious community, dressed indeed in the flowing garb of Orientals, and distinguished by some peculiarities belonging to their country, and their clime, but otherwise not altogether unlike, in their general devotional habits, to a people of modern times. There might be among them—no doubt, there were—the careless and worldly-minded, the vicious and profligate, the profane and immoral. There would be also the usual crowd of formalists and mere professors, who swelled the visible train of worshippers, and drew near to God with their lips, when their heads were far from Him. But, as a whole, we imagine—at least, I suppose that many do—that the glorious Temple was thronged with Israelites, showing all outward signs of piety,—bringing sacrifices, offering prayers, chanting psalms, hearing instruction from the priest's lips, or the Levites' readings, and joining, on every Sabbath Day, in united adoration of Jehovah, the Living God, the God of Israel.

But, whatever may have been the case in later days after the return from the Captivity, we are sure that this was *not* the state of things in the time of Jeremiah. Very different, indeed, is the account which the Bible gives us of the practices at Jerusalem, in the Temple Courts, in the Temple itself, in those days. In Josiah's time, that is, in the time of Jeremiah, and for eighteen years of that good king's reign, there were vessels for the worship of the Sun and Moon and all the Host of Heaven in the very Temple: there were obscene symbols "in the *House of Jehovah*,"



houses of impurity “by the *House of Jehovah*,” horses and chariots of the Sun “at the entrance of the *House of Jehovah*,” idolatrous altars, which Manasseh had made, “in the two Courts of the *House of Jehovah*.” We had the full account of all these and of a multitude of other abominations like them, which existed till the eighteenth year of king Josiah, in the chapter which was read as the first Lesson for last Sunday Morning’s Service. There were high places for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Moloch, built of old by King Solomon, and still standing before Jerusalem, which Josiah at last destroyed, as he did also a multitude of other idolatrous places throughout the whole land,—

“and he brake in pieces the images, and hewed down the Asheras, and filled their places with the bones of men.”

The priests of these high places, within the kingdom of Judah, he displaced from their ministry. But what did he with those in the cities of Samaria? We are told he slew them all: the Heb. Text says distinctly he “sacrificed them upon the altars,”—

“and burned men’s bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.”

Were they killed *upon*, or perhaps only killed *by*, the altars, and afterwards burnt upon them? However this may be, certain it is, as I have shown more at length on a former occasion, that the practice of sacrificing their firstborn children—of first killing and then burning them with fire—was very common in Jerusalem, and the Prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, denounce it in the strongest terms, as one of the habitual abominations of their people. They seem even to have pretended that they had some Divine Authority for it which the Prophet in God’s Name indignantly again and again—repudiates,—

“Which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind.”

And at any rate, after performing these sacrifices, they went up, we are told, with the reek of innocent blood upon their hands, to worship Jehovah in His Temple.

“Yea, declare unto them their abominations, that they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass through [the fire] for it to devour. . . . For, when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my Sanctuary to profane it; and so, thus have they done in the midst of my House.” Ez xxii.37,39.

In fact, a corrupt belief must tend to evil in the life: the character of the Divinity worshipped will be reflected with-

out fail in the worshippers. Thus it is evident that the cruel, the impure, idols before which the apostate Israelites bowed, led them into all kinds of abomination, contrary to the laws of their Divine King. And, even those who remained nominally worshippers of Jehovah, if they thought of Him as cruel, as partial, as jealous, would reflect in their own lives the defects which they in their ignorance ascribed to the Most High.

Those who do not know God to be good, pitiful, merciful, do not, of course, know how hateful are cruelty, selfishness, unmercifulness, in His eyes. Those who do not know Him to be righteous and just do not fear lest He should visit with His judgment the oppressor and the traitor. Thus those false prophets of Israel, of whom Jeremiah speaks in the text, whose duty it was to enlighten their fellowcountrymen, to bring messages from God to them, to impart to them true views of the Divine Being, led the people astray not in their worship alone, which would have been comparatively of little consequence, but in their moral practice, into the habitual toleration and indulgence of all kinds of vices. They thoroughly misled the people, teaching them to be content with their present doings, and assuring them of being safe in them, Elijah, it is true, according to the story which has been lately read in our hearing, massacred without mercy at the brook Kishon the 450 prophets of the Baal, of the new Tyrian Baal, -whom Jezebel, the Tyrian Princess, had lately introduced into Israel. But there remained still the 400 prophets of the old Syrian Baal—the prophets of the groves as they are called, who prophesied lies out of their own head before Ahab and Jehoshaphat, and three centuries afterwards Jeremiah could write:—

“The Prophets prophecy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their mean.”

The Priest represented the errors of the people in their most intense form. He was not so much the teacher—that was the Prophet's office—as the leader of their worship. The position, which the Priest arrogated to himself, was that of one nearer to the Divinity than other men, and invested with a certain sacredness, a certain power, in consequence. Power, how dear it is to the heart of man! Yet the great apostle said, “not that we would have dominion over your faith,” and thereby disclaimed for himself any pretensions to priesthood, to mediate between the soul and God. But the priests of Israel had lent themselves to idol-



worship, or to a false, a corrupt, form of the worship of Jehovah. The people still came to them to ask counsel of God, to present their offerings before God. But their power and influence were far greater as ministers of some idol, who could be hidden or withdrawn from his worshippers at the priest's pleasure,—who could be flattered and cajoled by the prayers and persuasions of the priest, if bribed by rich presents or plentiful sacrifices,—whose power and presence, being limited, gave more room for the pretensions of the Priest,—than as ministers of the Living God, who fills Heaven and Earth with His Presence, but dwells also with the humble and contrite, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hence these corrupt Priests willingly endorsed the teaching of these corrupt Prophets, in order that they might rule the minds, preside at the altars, and suck their own gains, as far as possible, from the offerings of the people.

"The Priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the Law knew me not; the Pastors also transgressed against me, and the Prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

"Mine heart within me is broken because of the Prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of His Holiness. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil and their force is not right. For both Prophet and Priest are profane: yea, in my House have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord."

"And my people love to have it so!"

All love of truth had died out amongst them, or they had sunk to a moral level, at which the love of truth, for the truth's sake, was impossible to them. Very religious still in appearance, bringing their multitude of sacrifices still, burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, the blood of bullocks, lambs, and goats,—nay, the blood of their own innocent children,—to the altars of their idols, "the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul," yet true religion and true morality was banished from the land. To believe as they did—that is, to acquiesce in such notions as their false Prophets held out to them, was most easy, was most convenient, interfered least with their appetites, their passions. Or, if we speak of the upper classes, the men of power and influence, this teaching, no doubt, seemed to them most fitted to keep the existing state of things together, to ward off revolutionary influences, to confirm the power of the aristocracy, to keep the masses in subordination. What

might not be the consequences of unsettling the religious views of the multitude? They are satisfied now: they "love to have it so." Why disturb them with the Truth? Will they not throw off religion altogether, if their idols are thrown down, and turn against both teacher and ruler?

O faithless generation! Has God indeed left the world to the care of Priests and Prophets, and gone away far from us, far from the reach of the humble and contrite heart? You, Prophets and Priests, are here in the world to witness of God's Presence; and you use your influence to persuade the world that *God is gone!* and has left you as His representatives!

'And what will ye do in the end thereof'?

What would be the inevitable consequence of false teaching concerning God on the part of the Prophet, of a depraved, debased form of worship upheld by the Priest, of a mixture amongst the People of a languid indifference towards the truth, of a fanatical adhesion to idolatrous forms? What? but a general collapse of faith on every side,—of faith, the foundation of all great and noble deeds, of all that urges to self-sacrifice, of all that merges the present in the future, say, rather in the Eternal. Without faith man would be but a clever animal. Faith is the faculty which binds him to the true, the real, the eternal. It is not the blind credulity which makes him accept the teaching of past ages, because it offers him personal security in the unknown, untried, region beyond the grave. There is, indeed, in every one of us a dim dread of that unknown future. Conscience, witnessing against us, confirms the old tradition, as old as the days of Socrates, of blessedness for some in another world, of punishment and pains for others,—for *us*, says conscience, for we know we have deserved punishment. The keener our sense of what we ought to be, compared with what we know we are, the more likely seems it that the threatening voice should be speaking truth.

And the minister of religion does well—he is serving God and his brother man—by seeking to deepen this conviction in us, by bringing home to us constantly the awful glorious truth,—the foundation at once of a holy fear and a holy hope,—that there is a Living God who judgeth the earth. But, if between the minister of religion and the Prophet who supports him on the one hand, and the general enlightenment of the age, the Voice of God in Science and in

History, on the other, a gulf should intervene, and the chasm become so wide as to be impassable, what can we expect in an age of steady progression but a great disruption of all faith in many minds,—minds and hearts dear and precious to God, nearer to Him, even while they seem to deny Him, than the strict Pharisee, the dogmatic Scribe, the comfortable Sadducee. Our *good* people seem to think that the Lord of all would prefer a zeal for the honour of His Name—His Name little understood, a mere collection of vocables to many—to a zeal for truth, for righteousness, for purity, which represent imperfectly indeed, but really, His very Being to the hearts of men.

But when the false prophet and the ambitious priest have thus indoctrinated the multitude, swayed by self-interest alone, intent only on securing their own safety, here in this world from revolutionary violence, there in the other world from the punishment of some kind, which conscience tells them they deserve, and brought them to a state of determined opposition to any new light, which the progress of the race—say rather, which the Will of God controlling all events of human destiny—may bring to us, what will be the end, the issue? Instead of a *Reformation* effected with good will, with judgment, with a considerate care for the weak of the flock, we must expect a *Revolution*, bursting out through all barriers, and laying low, together with abuses, much that is truly venerable and precious.

Such a flood of desolation did come, we know, and sweep away the Jewish people, their worship, their Sanctuary, their priests and prophets together, their very national existence for a while, in the Babylonish Captivity. And Jeremiah lived to see it, and lived to share in the sorrows of that time. But when he says in the text—

“A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land,”—

he means not this; these fearful consequences had not yet come. It is not the occurrence of such woes,—the downfall of a state, or the outburst of a Reign of Terror,—that in the prophet’s eyes is so “wonderful and horrible.” He would rather have hailed these, if they came to put an end to the evils which he had before him. That which he calls here “wonderful and horrible,” or, rather, as his words properly mean, “astonishment and filthiness,” is the thing which was the root of all this mischief, the fact that God’s People should “love to have it so,” to have “false prophets” and

the "rule of priests,"—should accept a lie for the truth, should not care for the truth at all, but fight only for a religion which they wished to believe, because it seemed pleasant, easy, or expedient to do so.

Let us labour to avert such a catastrophe in our own little sphere, by strengthening and deepening the foundations of the faith, and leaving open questions and disputed points as open as possible. A flood of atheism may indeed pour over our land, and lay low our churches. But, however dismal such a visitation, it can be but temporary. Humanity is not, cannot be, atheistic. Let us, however, do what in us lies to save our fellowmen, our neighbours, our friends, those dearer to us than our own lives, from such an affliction, from such a sorrow, such a loss, such a danger. This we cannot do by fighting for old creeds, by insisting that what has been shall be, but by receiving and welcoming every ray of light, every word of truth, which God sends us by any messenger, assured with an assurance stronger than proof, deeper than demonstration, that—

"God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

[No. 2.—Fourth Series.]

## A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Evening, September 2, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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ROM.iii.31.—*Do we then make void the Law by faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the Law.*

THIS morning we were considering the corrupt state of things in Israel in the later days of the kings of Judah,—how ‘the Prophets prophesied falsely,’ and ‘the Priests bare rule by their means,’—and how Jeremiah saw that ‘a wonderful and horrible thing was committed in the land,’ not only in the fact that these things were so, but that the people “loved to have it so.” They were content to live on in this state of delusion, to practise their idolatries, discharging thus what they deemed the duties of religion with a great deal of outward show and formality, but a religion which did not consist in faith in the Presence of the Living God, which did not check—nay, allowed, encouraged—the indulgence of their vices and lusts,—as if there was none who “would visit for these things,” none “whose soul would be avenged on such a nation as this.” They were not true servants of Jehovah; they were not eagerly bent to listen to His Voice, in order that they might know and do His Will; they were not sincere lovers of the truth. And therefore they were so ready to listen to the teaching of these false prophets, to put the keeping of their consciences in the hands of these priests.

The text, from which I preached this morning, was the last verse of the first Lesson of the day, the utterance of a



Jewish Prophet. My text this evening is the last verse of the second Lesson of this evening, and expresses the thought of a Christian Apostle. Yet there is a very close connection between the two. It was the Religion of Faith which Jeremiah preached against the popular Religion of his time; it was the Religion of Faith which Paul preached against the traditional Creed of his time; and in both cases there was the like result. The true prophet, the messenger of God, was in each instance scouted and reviled, cast out, condemned, "counted as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things." The false prophets remained to all appearance in full power and influence, still preaching smooth things and prophesying deceits. The priests still continued to bear rule by their means, and keep the people bowed in the bonds of superstition and ignorance. And the people "loved to have it so." They did not want to be enlightened; they did not want to be disturbed in their delusions; and prophet, priest, and people together raged against the light-bringer, the prophet or the apostle, who threw a Divine Light, the Light of Truth, upon their doings. They charged the very messengers of God, the preachers of truth and righteousness, as evil-doers and corrupters, as undermining the foundations of morality by attacking the established or traditional system of belief, as encouraging a laxity of life and practice by proclaiming the free Gospel of God's Love to Man. They 'slanderously reported' of them as teaching that men 'might do evil that good might come,' might 'sin that grace might abound,'—as "making void the Law through faith."

And, what has been, shall be. Israel and her prophets and her apostacies from Jehovah would be nothing to us, if we could not see in her history, as reflected in a glass, our own circumstances, our own sins. Human nature is the same in every age, and hence the value of history: for he, who can write history truly as a true prophet, can tell the future from the past. Man is the same,—yes, and God's Grace is still the same; the Hand which guided our fathers, which sustained, corrected, chastened them, is still with us—visible to faith, felt by those who lean upon it, recognised by the penitent and contrite with awe, and yet with thankfulness and gladness.

Who then are *our* prophets—the prophets of the present day?—for we are not left only to learn from the past, from



what has been said of God by men of other days. He has His living witnesses amongst us. The Past truly is sacred and venerable: but the Present is also full of Him, the Living God, who "was, and is, and is to be." Though God is near to every man,—though 'in Him we live and move and have our being,'—though, as a Father, He communes by His Spirit with everyone of us, and dwells in the childlike and obedient heart,—yet from time to time He raises up some especially among their fellowmen, who are gifted by Him to be His witnesses with powers of utterance of various kinds,—preachers, poets, orators, men of science, authors of all grades, some endowed with what we call original genius, borrowing nothing but from Him who made them, others whose minds are more or less perfect mirrors to collect, reflect, refract, the light of the age,—that light which the Father of Lights has given, to show forth His Glory, and help us to clearer views of His character and doings. Even the lighter literature of our day, where it is pure and truthloving, has a share in the prophetic office. And the newspaper, *the historian of the present*, has indeed a power which is truly tremendous,—tremendous, because of the temptations to untruthfulness, to idol-worship, which surround it,—because it spreads so far and wide into every household, appealing on every subject, not to those only who are qualified to judge, but to all. The more honor to those who wield such power with a constant remembrance that they are not to serve themselves with it but God and Man, and that neither can be served by anything short of the pure and simple truth.

Who again are the priests of our day? There must be one in the Christian congregation to lead the prayers of the rest: united worship makes such a functionary necessary. But he, who speaks aloud in the Church, whose voice goes before the rest, is not on that account a priest—ought not, at least, to presume to take that title in the proper meaning of the word, as one who is more sacred, more near to the Divine Ear, than the humblest worshipper, whose voice is mingled with the rest. As a 'presbyter'—an elder—he may be entitled to respect for his age, his character, his learning, his ability, for the very office which he bears as appointed to lead the devotions of others. But he is but a "minister,"—a servant—Christ's minister, the servant of the congregation.

There is, indeed, a priesthood to which no man can appoint, of which man cannot judge, but can only thankfully receive its blessings. When any one member of Christ's Church, however lowly and of little account, has a larger measure than his brethren of the spirit of Christ, his prayers, his spoken words, his written thoughts, his very life and deeds, may show us that he is 'walking with God,' that even in this world he has a bright vision of the excellent glory, that vision which the pure in heart enjoy, who see God. Such as these, we feel, stand nearer to the Presence of God than others: in their measure, like the Great High Priest, they help their brethren to draw near to God. By their ministry of patient longsuffering love in life and in death, by their unshaken trust in God, their faithfulness in duty, their tender compassion for the fallen and erring, their pity for the sinner while they condemn the sin, their 'laying down their lives for their brethren,' they bear witness, in their measure, as Christ did, for the love of the Father who dwells in them. They help to bring their brethren nearer in faith and hope to the footstool of the Divine Majesty; they offer their portion of that great sacrifice from all Humanity, God's Child, redeemed by the indwelling of the Living Word, which is 'truly acceptable in God's sight,' with which 'the Father is well pleased.' And thus they fulfil in their measure unconsciously the office of true priests.

But they will do so, as I have said, unconsciously. Priests such as these, will not attempt to "bear rule": like the Master, whom they follow, they "will not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear their voice in the streets." They have learned of him who 'was meek and lowly in heart,' who came 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister,' to be the servant of all. There is a priestly spirit, which strains now after power, as in the days of old,—which strives to interpose the authority of man between the soul of a fellowman and his Maker,—which strives to keep the human mind in thralldom, to lord it over the consciences of men. And this evil spirit 'bears rule' by the help of false prophets,—those leaders of public opinion who suppress or distrust the truth, who will not be faithful to their office, as God's agents, for helping the progress of His kingdom on earth, by maintaining the righteous cause at all hazards, though it seem the weakest, as men count strength, who reckon by

worldly signs of power. For, if such prophets and priests abound in any age, it is assuredly because 'the people love to have it so.' Those who should lead in these matters too often follow; and leaders and people act and react on one another. Speaking the truth is not now, any more than it was in the time of our Lord, the sure way to be believed, welcomed, honoured: it was the way for him to the scourge and spitting, the crown of thorns and the bloody death. God has raised up His witnesses, like Elijah and Jeremiah of old, even in the most corrupt age, and with such results as Stephen describes, 'Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?' And who have been in all ages the chief persecutors? Not the careless and ignorant mob, in the first instance, until stimulated from without,—not princes and men in authority, except as they have been tools in the hands of a more subtle power,—not the "prophets who prophesied falsely," but were not sufficiently in earnest to persecute,—no, not these, but the "priests who bare rule by their means,"—the men who made most profession of religion, and wielded, for their own party purposes, the influence, which a reputation for sanctity, whether personal or official, confers,—the Scribes and Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the Ecclesiastical Rulers, of all ages.

Such as these have again and again persecuted those, who, however insignificant themselves, have been God's witnesses to speak truths most needful—and therefore often most unwelcome—in their generation. And the witnesses have been silenced again and again,—in more savage times by fire and sword,—in more civilized, by every means with reach of the persecutors, false witness and reviling, appeals to the mob, to the passions of the ignorant, the fears of the fanatical, the suspicious dread of change on the part of those in authority. They have been silenced, perhaps; but on their fall a hundred tongues have been set loose to proclaim the truths which they were punished for uttering. The light will stream in through the crevices of the ancient building. Words of truth will not die, but live in many ears, in many hearts, when the clamor with which they were met has died away.

But if our prophets, instead of bearing faithful witness to the "things which they have seen and heard," whether in Nature or in History, concerning the structure of the Heavens and the Earth, or the doings, the sayings, the writings,

of men in past times, were to suppress all facts that did not tend to bolster up a foregone conclusion, to maintain a theory, to support the existing state of things, whether bad or good,—to suppress all facts which in their opinion had a *dangerous* tendency,—if they yielded to the influence of the dominant powers so far as to do this, and those dominant powers availed themselves of this treason of the prophets against the truth, against the force of reason, against the fact, to build up for a time still higher their own authority, their “rule” over the people, appealing to the apprehensions of the timid and fearful, threatening them with the dissolution of all order, of all security for life and goods in this world, and with everlasting torments in the world to come, if they ventured to listen to anything which seemed discordant with the teaching their priests had given them,—and if the people acquiesced in these things, and sunk farther and farther from spiritual religion into a sensuous worship, even though that worship should still pretend to be addressed to the Living God,—what a “wonderful and horrible thing would be committed” in our Protestant land!—what a fearful departure would this be from the service of Him who cannot lie, into whose kingdom no lie can enter, who is the Very God of Truth!

In such a state of things we might well expect that there would be an outcry against any, whose voice should be raised, however feebly, to protest on behalf of fact, of reason, to proclaim that the truth of God does not need the falsehoods of men to support it,—that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, nor magic nor mummerly, but a spiritual eternal kingdom in the hearts of men,—that men cannot see, much less taste or handle God!—that there is but one Mediator between God and Man in the Christian Church, and that he has brought us all so near to the Father, that we need no priest of man’s creation to intervene between our souls and the Majesty Divine. But what will be the end? “What will ye do in the end thereof”? A fall from a higher purer faith to a more debased and sensuous one, if it do not amount to a falling away from God altogether, yet assuredly tends towards it, tends to weaken all true faith, that “evidenc of things unseen,” of things that cannot be seen, which is at once the crown and root of true humanity, which “overcomes the world,” which endures as “seeing Him who is invisible,” to which

things spiritual are the only realities, and things sensible "the fashions of this world which pass away."

But idolatry in any form, idolatrous forms and ceremonies,—if even they profess to be shrines and shelters where faith may take refuge,—must tend to kill it utterly. They may seem to some to help their devotions; but meanwhile the devotion is transferred, perhaps almost unconsciously, from the True Object of Worship to an idol—it may be, to many idols. The conscience is pacified, perhaps,—the yearning of the soul for its true rest is quieted for a time, quieted as with an opiate, not with wholesome food, not with the Bread of Life. The moral nature does not grow in breadth and height. The heart is not expanded with charity, with true love for everything loveable, for everything "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report," for all that is virtuous and praiseworthy, wherever it is found, without regard to differences of Church or Creed. Hatred, most bitter hatred, is not cast out, against those whose lives are as pure and consistent as their own, but who do not pronounce the same ecclesiastical shibboleth. Religion, in short, is not a surrender of the whole heart to God, to be renewed after the Divine Image. It is a system of means to escape from the pangs of conscience here and the pains of hell hereafter,—means often degrading to the worshipper, because degrading to the character of Him who is worshipped.

The wide spread over our native land in these days of a debased idolatrous form of Christianity,—a feeble imitation of that grand system of the Church of Rome, which has at least the merit of being true to its own principles, principles which have been recognised for many ages by the almost universal consent of Christendom, though repudiated by our Protestant Church and Nation, as at variance in our belief with the fundamental truths of Christianity,—I say, the zealous efforts which are now being made to propagate this kind of semi-Romanism, and the success which seems to have hitherto to a very large extent attended these efforts,—may present our country to the outward eye, perhaps, as more religious than ever. But beneath that deceitful appearance, the pomps of worship, the pride of ecclesiastics, the images and paintings, the incense and the vestments, true faith will more and more perish. Instead of being fed with the bread of life, with spiritual truths which are the perfection of reason, it will be choked with dogmas which are



antagonistic to reason; and an ungodly materialistic philosophy will grow up and flourish over its ruins.

Jeremiah, as we heard this morning, complained of the prevalence of this idolatrous, untruthful, essentially irreligious spirit, in his own times. They brought their sacrifices, indeed, with all due punctuality: they spared no expense, it would seem, on outward paraphernalia of worship. But 'To what purpose,' says the Prophet—

"To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me."

And why? because, with all their professions, with all their exertions, with all their expenditure, he found no *love of truth* among the people:—

"They bend their tongues like their bow for lies; but they are not valiant for the truth upon earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord."

They had no love of truth for the truth's sake. And this had poisoned and corrupted insensibly all their doings, so that they were now actually fighting against the truth, and believing that they were serving God in so doing. They had "taught their tongue," the prophet says, "to speak lies": they "could not deliver themselves, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Jeremiah, as we know, predicted a terrible coming judgment; and his word was fulfilled when the desolating wave of Babylonian conquest swept over the land, and brought to an end the lies of the prophet, the domination of the Priest, the superstition and idolatry of the people.

But we need not go back to ancient times, for an illustration of what "the end" is likely to be, when "the prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means and the people love to have it so." Was not this something like the state of things in France before the Reign of Terror? With a flood of unbelief, bursting in upon a land, what may not be feared from the unbridled passions of the multitude! In the time of the French Revolution, as we know, the religion of the people seemed to have well nigh died out. Superstition and immorality had embraced each other, as it were, in the highest places. It was a consequent distrust of all religion, a reaction against all belief, combined with a reaction against all civil government, the result of long ages of oppression, which produced those disastrous



events, those days of blood, of crime, of anarchy,—not free-thinking, as some have said, and an open arena for the expression of opinions religious or irreligious, to be corrected by the general religious instinct of man,—but the long suppression of all thought and feeling, the coexistence of a rigid religious system with a total relaxation of life and morals. You may remember in what terms the historian of the French Revolution has spoken on this subject: Alison, i.p.124,125:—

The Church in France experienced the fate of all attempts, in an advancing age, to fetter the human mind. The resistance to its authority became general, and, in the fervour of opposition, the good and the bad parts of its doctrines were indiscriminately rejected. This is the usual consequence of attempts to force incredible and absurd doctrines upon public belief. As long as the minds of the people are in a state of torpor or inactivity, they embrace without scruple whatever is taught by their spiritual guides. But, when the spirit of investigation is roused, and the light of reason breaks in, the reaction becomes just as strong in the opposite direction, and infidel supplies the place of superstitious fanaticism. How strong soever the force of superstition may be, the power of reason is still stronger: if the former is to be supported, the latter must be enchained.

Happily for England, notwithstanding the flood of Ritualism which is just at present sweeping over her, there are multitudes still among her members, among her clergy—many still among her leading men, her Prophets and Teachers—who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of the day, who have not yielded up their rights as thinking beings to the demands of a semi-Popish priesthood, or to the equally tyrannical claims of a blind fanaticism,—who are firmly convinced that God lives and reigns in the Universe both of Mind and Matter,—that every discovery of what either is or has been can only redound to His Glory,—that no lie, whether maintained from an indolent unwillingness to examine into the fact, or a superstitious dread to do it, is of the truth, or can be acceptable to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Father of spirits, who can only be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and who seeketh only such to worship Him. God's prophets are still raising their voices in the midst of us—faithful ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter even of the New Testament killeth; it is the spirit alone that giveth life. God's priests are still among us,—not man-made priests, seeking to rule over the faith of their flocks,—not priests in any exclusive sense, seeing that the whole Christian community is “a holy priesthood, to offer

up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,"—but men whose sole desire is to be "helpers of the joy" of their brethren, to minister to them of that good thing which they have themselves received, to comfort their hearts, and be comforted among them, by the mutual faith of one another. And there are people, who desire to be led forward into the light, and are determined that neither false prophet nor overbearing priest shall call light darkness or darkness light for them. And the "end" will, we trust, be a more earnest religion, a more heart-searching, life-cleansing morality, a more hopeful spirit of missionary enterprise, when we look on all around us as sharing with us in God's gifts, and trust that the day will dawn upon us at last, when the knowledge of our God shall 'cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.'

## A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, September 9, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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GAL.ii.14,15.—*But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

It is a temptation, to which all religious teachers are exposed, to wish their converts to make what St. Paul calls in the words before the text “a fair show in the flesh,”—such as may do them and their teaching credit in the eyes of the world, more especially of the religious world. It seems excusable, natural, even right and commendable, in many cases, to aim at this. How are the alms of the faithful to be obtained for religious purposes, for the support of ministers, for the support of missions, unless men see some practical results, decent and orderly congregations, flourishing schools, prosperous communities? Yes! man looks, and must look, very much on the outward appearance. For that part of our work, therefore, which depends on man, we must, perhaps, consult appearances: we must wish, and rightly wish, to make some “show in the flesh.”

But there is, notwithstanding, danger in this; for appearances are proverbially deceitful; and to aim at them is almost inevitably to shoot far wide of the mark which we ought to have had in view. Large and attentive congrega-

tions—liberal contributions for Church purposes—punctual observance of Church ceremonies—full numbers at the communion—are not in themselves sure signs that God's work is being done among a people. The only certain evidence of this is the growth of a Christian spirit among them, the spirit of selfsacrifice, the spirit of meekness and charity, the spirit which urges men on to the faithful discharge of their daily duty amidst all difficulties and discouragements,—the spirit that makes them long for the truth for the truth's sake,—the spirit that can welcome toil and suffering, yea, the laying down, if needful, of life itself, for the sake of the brethren,—in one word, the spirit described in the text, that glories in nothing—

“save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto it, and it unto the world.”

Those teachers and preachers who followed St. Paul among the Galatian churches, anxious that their converts should be known to all the world as the worshippers of Jehovah, the God of Israel,—anxious especially that the Jewish Church should admit them into its ranks, that so their old ancestral faith might be more abundantly glorified,—compelled them, we are told, to be circumcised. This rite, which the Jewish people regarded as Divine, as the sign of their national covenant with God, was indeed unmeaning to these Gentiles, who had had another covenant preached to them, wide as the earth, embracing every child of man within its gracious provisions. But what then? They would seem in this way, by submitting to this rite, to make a more emphatic and unmistakeable protest against the Paganism which surrounded them; they would also be more acceptable to the Mother Church at Jerusalem, which was still bound very strongly in the fetters of Judaism. Their teachers would be able to point exultingly to them, as witnesses to the triumphant effect of their labours, which had brought these heathen to accept the Messiah of the Jewish Nation as their prophet, to become Jews in fact, with all their exclusiveness, under the name of Christians.

But see how the apostle seatters indignantly to the winds these fair pretences, though they seemed to have the spread of Christianity, the welfare and increase of the Church, for their motive and apology. “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,”—save in that which is to the Jew a stumbling-block and to the Greek

foolishness! Circumcision, for a Gentile convert to Christianity, he says in effect, is a lie. The Cross of Christ—the exhibition to the world of faith and love made perfect by suffering, of the entire filial confidence of the Son of Man in his Heavenly Father,—the meek acceptance of shame and suffering, of death itself, for the sake of the truth,—this is the open way into the presence of God,—open to all of us, who will follow our Lord, open to the humblest and lowest, as well as to the highest, to the despised and ignorant heathen, as well as to the proud, selfrighteous Jew and the learned Greek,—a way not to be closed up again by rites and ceremonies, by the claims of a law which has been done away, for all God's children everywhere, by the law of love. No half-measures will suit our fervent apostle. A Jew himself, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, brought up in the strictest sect of the Pharisees, he now exclaims:—

“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again, to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love.”

A principle was here involved: Circumcision was represented as a means of admission into God's nearer Presence, from which the uncircumcised were excluded; even as baptism is now regarded by some within the Christian Church, instead of being looked upon as a sign of fellowship with Christ, a pledge of taking up the cross with him, who lived and died that he might declare God's Love to us all. Away with it then! said St. Paul: it has become an idol: it pretends to limit the free grace of God, which the Cross of Christ proclaims. And if St. Paul had lived in these days, he would in like manner—not indeed have abolished baptism, because in its true meaning it never was exclusive, but was meant to be a sign of the Kingdom of God set up upon the earth, a witness of the good tidings sent for all mankind, of the Gospel preached to every creature,—but he would have protested against its being used, as many have used it, and still do use it, as well as the other Sacrament, to limit God's Love, to bar the way into His Presence.

“In Christ Jesus,” he says, “neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,” or, in the parallel passage, “but faith working by love.” Neither the reception of some outward rite, the performance of some

ceremony,—nor yet, on the other hand, as some in our days seem to imagine, the mere protest against such rites when they have become perverted, when they have been made into idols,—neither Catholicism nor Protestantism, neither Rome nor Luther,—will avail anything, but faith alone, that faith which was in Christ, that faith of which the symbol is the Cross,—“faith working by love,” removing the mountains of human perverseness, unquenched amidst the many waters of sorrow and of suffering, conquering by patience, triumphant in death,—that “faith working by love,” which St. Paul himself exhibited so brightly, when he said—

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair,—persecuted, but not forsaken,—cast down, but not destroyed: always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”

This “faith,” this doctrine of the cross, as the Christian’s watchword, was totally different from the national expectation of the Jews, of the coming of an earthly king with great pomp and glory, who should tread the nations under his feet, and raise them to posts of special honour in his kingdom. It was so *new* to the Jewish people, that they stood aghast at it, as something monstrous. But those who received it, who drank in this Divine teaching, and followed Christ as their Lord and Leader in the battle of life,—these felt that a new day had risen upon their souls,—felt that through him they had found a Father,—felt that in him their Father was speaking to them,—felt that their one great work in this world was now to follow his example, and by daily labour and toil and suffering, if need be, by death, to show forth their Father’s Love to all.

For not by any of those vague, though grand, expressions, which yet we must use if we would speak of God in our imperfect words, do we come into His Presence. “Omnipotence” — “Omnipresence” — “Omniscience” — these attributes of the Divine Being are indisputable: but with our feeble intellects we cannot realise them. Even the sublime words, “God is Light! God is Love!” express ideas too vast and grand for our minds to grasp. No! not in mere abstract words or notions is God truly revealed to us,—not in the definitions of a creed is His Glory and His Goodness set forth. He comes to us in the Son of Man, full of warm human feeling, blessing the little ones, loving with more than mother’s tenderest love that angel in the



helpless babe, which that God-given, God-revealing, mother's love would die for. He comes to us in him—in Jesus our Lord—pitying and helping the sorrowful, the sufferer, pitying still and calling back the wanderer, the lost,—teaching the ignorant,—warning the careless,—only stern to the selfish and inhuman, to the hard, proud, selfrighteous Pharisee, the despiser of his brethren. Herein is Love—not that we found out the Hidden God, came forward into His Presence, and brought our hearts and offerings to the feet of the Creator and Sustainer of all this glorious universe—but that He loved us, and in the Son of Man displayed to us His own Excellencies, showed us the Love and Truth of the Father who dwelt in Him, exhibited to us glimpses of that perfection, of that Divine Human Perfection, of what Humanity is when truly one with the Divine, with which the Father is well pleased, for the sake of which our sins and our shortcomings are pardoned and past by. And we too, as followers of Christ, much each in our measure seek to reflect something of that bright image of our Father's glory, as "broken lights" of Him from whom we draw our birth, striving to be righteous as He is righteous, true as He is true, holy as He is holy—yes, and loving as He is loving—setting the Cross of Christ before us as the symbol of our own lives, since by that our Lord and Master sealed his witness of God's Love to us.

But let us consider a little more closely the actual words of St. Paul in the text.

"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*."

In another passage he shows us what he means by this expression, a "new creature," or a "new creation," where he says,—

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, [or there is a new creation], old things are passed away; behold! all things are become new."

(i) The doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Cross, sets a *new life before us*, It is no longer unmeaning, purposeless, as if we were put here, merely like insects of a day, to flutter our wings in the sunshine and die, or perhaps have our little lives cut short by some midday storm, while yet it is high noon. The recollection of that cross of Jesus, borne not only as he trod the way to Calvary, but borne in spirit by him his whole life long, reminds us that we are not here for our own pleasure, or without an object, but

for work—for labour and toil, and, if need be, for suffering. We know how an eminent writer of our own day has employed his masterly pen in describing the lovely scenes in which our Saviour's childhood and youth were passed—has told us how he must have looked out upon the beautiful hills of Galilee, and drunk in the peaceful joy of nature as he gazed, and steeped his spirit in calm and quiet repose. "Such, above all," says Dean Stanley, "is Nazareth."

Fifteen gently rounded hills seem as if they had met to form an enclosure for this peaceful basin; they rise round it, like the edge of a shell, to guard it from intrusion. It is a rich and beautiful field in the midst of these green hills—abounding in gay flowers, in fig-trees, small gardens, hedges of the prickly pear—and the dense rich grass affords an abundant pasture. The expression of the old topographer was as happy as it is poetical—'Nazareth is a rose, and, like a rose, has the same rounded form, enclosed by mountains as the flower by its leaves.'... These are the natural features, which for nearly thirty years met the almost daily view of Him, who "increased in wisdom and stature" within this beautiful seclusion. *Sinai and Palestine*. p.365.

It might have been what the world would call a happy lot to have remained in that peaceful home,—never to have come down from those hills to the bustling scene by the Lake of Gennesareth, to mingle with its crowds, to draw the multitudes around him, to find a sphere for his words and works of mercy, to begin that ministry of love for God, of love for his brethren, which should lead him to the crown of thorns, the scourge, the cross. But his Father's call was heard in his heart, and he obeyed it: he "came not to do his own will but the Will of Him that sent him, and to finish His work." He went forth, at that word,—

"to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind."

And I say, my brethren, he has taught us thus to take a new view of life—as a time for work, not for pleasure or repose. There were moments, no doubt, when *his* spirit was refreshed amidst his daily toils with the sight of the blue sky above and the green hills around him, with the tokens of his Father's Presence on every side, and the assurance which they gave that those who lose—at God's command and in the path of duty—the full enjoyment here of all this glory and beauty, shall save it unto Life Eternal, shall have the longings of their nature satisfied in the world beyond the grave. And the same refreshment will God give us, from time to time, as we go about our daily duties. But the symbol of our life is the Cross—a work to be done—a labour to be carried through—a course to be run—a fight to

be fought—looking for none of earth's rewards—content whether God in His Wisdom gives or withholds them—looking only for that “crown of righteousness,” the reward of a faithful life, which “the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day.”

Does this sound enthusiastic and romantic? Yet it is the very faith which “overcomes the world,” as St. John says,—the faith by which, as St. Paul tells us in the text, “the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world.” It is the faith in which the noblest of our race have lived and died, even those who knew not the name of him whose Cross they bore—like the good old man of Athens, of whom we heard the other day, who spent his life in seeking to enlighten, instruct, improve, his fellowmen, and had for his reward on earth the cup of poison. But if this new view of life, which is taught by the Cross, seems to us extravagant, wherein then are we Christians? Wherein do we differ from the materialist, the mere deist, the worshipper of expediency, who, no doubt, finds a sober and just life, relieved by a certain amount of kindness and sympathy for those about him, the nearest way to ease of body and mind? Why do we talk about religion at all, what means our worship, our yearning for another life beyond the grave, if our code of duty culminates in self-interest? This is the old Adam—the selfish nature—in whom we all die: there is no hope of immortality here. The life of love, grounded on the knowledge of the Blessed God, our Heavenly Father and our Friend, the Father of our crucified Lord, is the life in Christ, the second Adam, in whom we are all to be made alive.

(ii) For, secondly, this *knowledge of the Blessed God, our Father and Friend*, is part of the “new creation”—the new state of things into which we are brought by the Gospel—part of the revelation made to us by the Cross of Christ. We might have thought that surely that Blessed one—that dear Son of God, whose heart was full of filial love, and fervent affection to all that was “honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,”—he who was never heard to strive nor cry, “nor did any man hear his voice in the streets,”—who was meek and lowly, gentle and merciful,—who never broke a bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flame,—we might have thought, I say, that one so dear as this to the Father's heart would have been spared those sorrows, those burdens

and pains, which fall so justly to *our* lot,—would not have been suffered to meet with disappointment and rejection, to “endure such contradiction of sinners against himself,” to “resist unto blood, striving against sin.” We might rather have thought that some Divine Help would have been given him to overcome the unruly spirits of men—to crush them into subjection—to bring down their stubbornness—to do away their unbelief. But, we know, it was not so. The holy and loving one was despised and rejected of men,—was scorned and scouted, scoffed at, spitted at,—was all his life long a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and in his hour of death forsaken and alone. It was the Father’s Will that by that death upon the cross the work of his life should be consummated, and the triumph be won,—that not by the power of mighty works, not by the storm, and the earthquake, and the fire, should the Gospel spread and the kingdom of God set up on earth, but by the still small voice of the “truth spoken in love.”

And shall the disciple be above his lord? Must not we expect, must not we be willing,—if we take up the Cross, as the symbol of our faith,—to witness the like result in our experience, and “count it not strange, as if some strange thing happened unto us,” when, in the path of duty, trial disappointment, contempt and opposition, meet us, and we are made in our measure partakers of Christ’s sufferings—

“who did no sin, neither was evil found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps”?

It is enough for us to know that God’s work will be done, in us and by us, but done in His own way. Our business is to sow the seed, leaving it to Him to give the increase,—to “cast our bread upon the waters,” whether we may find it again speedily, or find it after many days, or find it not at all in this life, but only in the life to come, when every faithful deed on earth shall be remembered, and the lost shall be found, gathered into the garner of God.

(iii) But, lastly, the Cross of Christ teaches us another Lesson—it throws *a new light upon our relations to each other*. There have been many, we know, who have gone out of this world to do, as they thought, their duty to God,—who have cut themselves off from human ties of every kind, from human fellowship, and have buried themselves in privacy

and solitude, that there, undisturbed by the world, they might pour out their hearts to God in prayer, and wash away their sins with tears of penitence. In our Lord's time, we know, there were such as these, of whom Neander writes as follows, *Ch. Hist.*i.59 :—

About two centuries before the birth of Christ, there arose in the quiet country, lying on the W. side of the Dead Sea, a society of piously disposed men, who sought in these solitudes a refuge from reigning corruptions, from the strifes of parties, and the storms and conflicts of the world. Their society sprung up precisely as the monastic system did at a later period. They are thus described by the elder Pliny. ‘On the W. border of that lake dwell the *Essenes*, a race entirely by themselves, and, beyond every other in the world, deserving of wonder—men living in communion with nature—without wives, without money. Every day their number is replenished by a new troop of settlers, since they are much visited by those whom the reverses of fortune have driven, tired of the world, to their modes of living. Thus happens, what might seem incredible, that a community, in which no one is born, yet continues to subsist through the lapse of centuries. So fruitful for them is disgust of life in others.

But “disgust of life” is not what we are taught by the Cross of Christ. Without wishing to judge those, who in that and later days have had recourse to monastic seclusion, as a refuge from the world, as the best means of preparing themselves for heaven, yet this is not what the Cross of Jesus teaches, or what St. Paul learned at its foot. Doubtless, our Lord might have retired to that quiet shore, might have fed his soul there with holy and peaceful thoughts, might have had sweet “communion with nature,” and kindly intercourse with his fellow-hermits. And St. Paul might have done the same: and they would both, humanly speaking, have escaped thereby a painful life and a bloody death. But the Cross of Christ teaches us another Lesson than this—that we must *not* go out of the world, to find a refuge from its griefs or its temptations, or to make ourselves ready for heaven. It teaches us that we are not placed here to seek the selfish end of securing our own quiet, or of saving our own souls,—if, indeed, true peace can be gained, or the soul's highest welfare won—its “salvation worked out,” as St. Paul says—in this way. It teaches us that we are not to shrink from our duties—not to avoid our fellowmen—not to abandon them. Rather, it teaches us that we have work to do among them,—that God will have us go forth with the word of truth upon our lips, and faith, hope, and love, possessing our hearts, to do our Father's Will in the world, to serve our brethren, to



spend and be spent, and, if need be, lay down our lives for them.

Often, no doubt, it might be very pleasant for us to withdraw from stations of danger and difficulty, to forsake the post which God has given us to keep for him in the battle-field of life, and retire to the silken tent of ease—carrying with us, however, the bitter consciousness that we have been unfaithful to our duty, false to the cause of truth, false to the Master whose name we bear, false to that Cross on which he died, and the sign of which was set on our brow. But it must not be so. When God, indeed, gives us the signal, by some act of his Providence, or by some stroke of sickness,—it may be, the stroke of death,—to retire from the field, we will bow to His Divine Deeree, assured that the battle will be won, and the victory gained, without our further labour. But till then we are bound to be true and faithful, even unto death—"in the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope"—whatever be the special course of duty, to which our God in His Wisdom has called us. Meanwhile, from time to time, let us meet, whenever we are summoned, around the Sacred Table, and renew those vows which were laid upon us at our Baptism,—pledging ourselves to stand firm together, foot to foot, shoulder to shoulder, as soldiers of Christ,—taking there that bread and wine, which are the symbols of his body that was broken, and his blood that was shed, as a sign that we too expect the Cross before the Crown.



[No. 4.—Fourth Series.]

## A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Evening, September 9, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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ROM.iii.31.—*Do we then make void the law through faith?  
God forbid! yea, we establish the Law.*

I TOOK this verse as my text last Sunday Evening: but the subject, with which I was then more particularly engaged, occupied fully the compass of my discourse, without my being able to enter at any length into the Apostle's meaning in these words. I propose now to examine more closely into the thought of St. Paul expressed in this passage, as applicable not only to his time and circumstances, but also to our own.

The charge, it seems, had been brought against him by the traditionary, Judaizing, party of that day, of wishing to 'make void the law' by preaching the new doctrine of "faith"—new, that is, because new to the men of that generation, whose ears had long been filled with Jewish dogmas and hearts filled with Jewish prejudices,—but in reality as old as the time when Abraham "trusted in God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness," or the time older still, when men, like Enoch, "walked with God." They charged him with breaking down the very foundations of morality, by preaching the free Gospel of the Grace of God, flowing forth to all alike, both Jew and Greek,—

"for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and in themselves have come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

They represented him—misrepresented him—as sanctioning a laxity of life and practice—as teaching men to ‘continue in sin that grace might abound,’ to ‘do evil that good might come’—whose damnation, he says, is just. He knew well that “the faith,” as preached by him, influencing the life, would bring forth that faithfulness in daily act, which, though at the best very imperfect, so as not to constitute a righteousness, in the strength of which a man could stand before a Holy God, would yet be far more complete and all-embracing, than any which the threatenings of the law could produce—that, in fact, by preaching “the righteousness of God,”—that gift of grace which is bestowed on each believing soul by Him, who out of His own free Love has redeemed us,—he was not making void the law: he was bringing men to yield to God’s Law a cheerful, willing, happy, obedience for love’s sake; and so the law itself was established and glorified.

In all ages the prophet, the apostle, the reformer, has been charged by his contemporaries with wishing solely to destroy—to overturn, and not build up. And indeed in the traditional religion of any country there is always something precious, even in the midst of the corruptions of any age, which needs care on the reformer’s part to save it, while the corruption is swept away, but which would still more surely perish, if it were left overwhelmed with so much that is contrary to its own nature. In Jeremiah’s time, the public recognition of Jehovah, by sacrifice and other ordinances, had been so blended with foul rites contrary to the Will of the Holy One, that a great reformation indeed was needed. Yet the prophet may have seemed to many, in denouncing them, to be denouncing the whole national religion, to be calling on his countrymen to withdraw their allegiance altogether from their princes and their priests, their rulers in Church and State. When St. Paul told the Jews that the ceremonial law had passed away, that “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availed anything nor uncircumcision,” he was accused, as we have seen, of wishing to set aside the moral law also, of saying let us give the reins to our appetites and passions, to show that we do not expect the Divine Favour on account of our works, but only through God’s Mercy declared to us in Christ. When Luther was awakened by God’s special grace to see the monstrous corruptions of the truth, which the notion of Church authority had gene-

rated in his day, he was acensed in like manner of seeking to withdraw his fellowmen from the restraints of religion, or else of recklessly depriving them of its consolations; since all laws for the conscience, all grace from above, had passed then, in the general opinion, into the hands of the priest.

Thus in different ages the cry has been raised against the new teacher, 'You are making void the Law!' Jeremiah was accused of endangering the *established* religion of the time, with disturbing the order of the state, the peace of the community, with raising fresh trouble for the kings and princes, with being in a minority, at variance with all around him—with "the prophets who prophesied falsely," and "the priests who bare rule by their means," and "the people who loved to have it so." Paul was charged with attacking *revealed* religion, the Mosaic religion, the traditionary system, handed down from the most ancient times with the Divine impress upon it, a system based upon their sacred books, and sanctioned by the practice of devout men of old, patriarchs and prophets, whose names were household words in Israel. Luther was charged with seeking to overthrow the Catholic Church, 'built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone,'—with the presumption of setting up his own individual views against the views of Bishops, Doctors, and Divines innumerable, with the crime of misleading his deluded followers out of that Church, built on the Rock, out of which there could be no salvation.

And now that instead of this idol, the Church,—in some cases, side by side with it,—another idol has been set up, the Bible,—precious, invaluable, in its place, but a mere idol, when it is put in the place of God,—now, I say, that voices here and there are raised to protest against such perversion of the truth, such abuse of the good gift of God,—to show that the Book, though in a sense Divine, is also human, is not in every word and letter the infallible oracle of the Supreme Wisdom,—those who speak thus are condemned as wishing to take away from men their only hope and consolation for this world and the next, as denying or treating lightly all moral obligations, as if these rested only on the stone tables of Sinai, as if God had not written them, according to the promise, "not in tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart"!

The great danger and mischief of making an idol of the

Bible is not perhaps fully realised at a first glance. Its teaching is for the most part so pure, so exalted,—the words especially of Christ and his apostles are so full of Divine Wisdom,—that we might feed on them, as many holy men have done, to our life's end, and find each day living bread for our souls. Why, then, say many, why seek to shake men's confidence in such sublime oracles? With the loss of that confidence will not all faith in the religion of the Bible vanish? Who shall show us any real good, who shall teach us concerning Our Father, His Will, His Ways, His Mind towards us, if these sacred pages can be shown to be in any respect untrustworthy or untrue? But shall we then stake the whole of that treasure, which the writings of the Old Testament and of the New contain for us, upon the superhuman perfection of each and every page of these manifold documents? Have the truths which they contain no self-evidencing power? Do we only know that the Psalmist of old 'tasted and saw that the Lord is good'? Have we never realised this for ourselves?

But the truth is that we cannot, if we would, maintain any longer the old traditionary dogma of the infallibility of the Scriptures—of those books which a number of pious Jews two or three centuries *before*, or a number of pious Christians two or three centuries *after*, Christ, agreed to regard henceforth as "canonical," rejecting all others as apocryphal. We run the risk of losing the precious contents of the casket altogether, by putting it in a position where it cannot, where it was not meant to, stand. We must place it lower that it may be safe. It is not we who charge the holy men of old with imposture, in which case their devout aspirations, their spiritual lessons, their moral precepts, would indeed lose their value for us, because we should no longer esteem the utterers. We hasten to relieve their memory from any such odious aspersions, by showing that some at least of their writings could never have been intended for authentic history, and that other portions, while real history from the writer's own point of view and with his limited knowledge of facts, are liable to the same kind of errors as those, to which the most perfect historians of modern times—and still more those of ancient times—are of necessity exposed.

Doubtless, however, in all times of transition, of reformation of religious opinion, there will be some who will be

tempted to make an unworthy use of the additional light. The best things, we know, may be abused. St. Paul's doctrines of grace, of salvation by faith alone, were very probably converted in some cases by carnal minds into an excuse for their own vices. And we know that in Holland and Germany, in the days of the Reformation, fanatical sects arose, who distorted the same doctrines, republished by Luther, into the most frightful immorality. So, too, in our own days, some by their extravagant assertions, their superficial investigations, their want of reverence, of tenderness, may bring discredit on the cause of truth, the cause of free enquiry; and their offences will be charged on those who utterly object to their practices. But we must not, as servants of God, be *too* careful of consequences, or be exceedingly jealous of our own reputation. To be so would show a want of faith in His Power and Presence, who alone can guide His children through dangers on every side into the haven of rest. If, at all such times, a certain number, when their fetters are burst, fall helplessly into the mire, it surely tends to show the benumbing qualities of those fetters, in which they have been so long bound by their religious teachers.

I remember that, in England, a clergyman holding very narrow views enclosed to me an extract from a public journal, in which the death of a young man—a compositor in a printing office—was reported, who had made away with himself, and who was known to have read my book among others of what are called by some good persons books of a “dangerous” character. I suspect that many a pious Jewish mother must have warned her child against making any acquaintance with the “dangerous” writings of a certain Paul, who, after the manner which they called “heresy,” so worshipped the Living God, the God of his fathers,—that many a devout matron of the Church of Rome must have rued the day, when her son or daughter first opened a book of the “apostate” monk of Wittemberg. And so this clergyman wrote to charge the untimely fate of this young man upon my teaching. My work, at all events, it was thought, had helped to unsettle his mind: he no longer believed in the Bible, as God’s infallible word: and so he lost all faith in God, all fear, all hope. My answer was very simple. How fearful a responsibility must rest on *you*—you, teachers of religion—who have kept the people



so long in darkness, that they cannot bear the light!—who have taught them that all their hopes for this life and for eternity depend upon the infallible truth of every word in the Bible! It is you who must answer before God if you have *wilfully* and *knowingly* done this,—if you have resolutely shut your eyes to the light of the age in which you live,—if you have refused to look into the great questions, which are occupying the thoughts of so many of your brethren, not the least thoughtful, learned, and devout, and which plainly God means to be specially discussed in the present day,—if you pretend to condemn books which you have never read, and to force upon the belief of your fellowmen incredible dogmas, which the plain facts of science show to be false. Great and grievous is the mischief which you are doing, and terrible in such cases as this may be the consequences to others, even if you are doing this in all sincerity,—as St. Paul presided at the death of Stephen, but “found mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief.” But, if you are suppressing the truth knowingly, and of set purpose, — if you deliberately ignore it, or misrepresent, calumniate, revile, condemn, cast out, the truth-speaker,—beware lest ye bring on you the judgment of those who ‘put darkness for light, and light for darkness,’ who think to serve the God of truth with falsehood, who “keep down the truth in unrighteousness”!

For does the “faith,” which we teach, “make void the Law”? In every case, Reformation has been a return from mere outside shows to reality, to the worship of Jehovah the Living God, in contrast with the idols, whose images had been set up in His Temple. The Jews, to whom Jeremiah preached, had abandoned themselves, kings, priests, prophets, and people, to the grossest forms of outward idolatry. The later Jews of St. Paul’s time were idolizing their Law, their history, their privileges. To have Abraham for their father was their boast and confidence. To write verses of the Law upon the borders of their garments, to observe minutely the trivial additions to it, which the traditions of the elders had made, was their notion of sanctity. St. Paul taught that we are all children of God by faith—that to be holy is to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds” after the likeness of our Father in Heaven, to be “perfect as He is perfect,” to be “rooted and grounded in love.” In Luther’s time a corrupt Church had again made religion but an ex-

ternal matter; the priest, with his pardons and his penances, had really relaxed all moral obligations. It was with the world in those days, according to those words of our Lord, "The Light which was in it"—the Church—"was darkness, and how great was that darkness"! The conscience was drugged with priestly absolutions; the spirit was fed with the garbage of mysticism; dreams and visions abounded, miracles and ecstatic fervors, instead of real faith and manly piety. God forbid that those days should return upon us, creeping back through pictures and images, false sanctities and superstitions, and culminating in the idolatry of the mass,—a worship of the fancy, not of the heart, still less of the reason!

But what is the "faith" which we would teach, and by which we trust, God helping us, to keep these idols out of our Sanctuaries? It is that of the old prophet, of the apostle, of the reformer, only modified with reference to the wants of the present day—a faith, which does not "make void"—yea, which "establishes"—the Law.

(i) We teach you, first, to trust in a Living God—*ever present—everywhere—to all*,—one whose judgment we cannot escape by outward acts of formal religion, by any amount of sacrifices or ceremonies,—

whose laws are everlasting and inexorable, so that heaven and earth must indeed pass away, if one jot of them failed,—laws which attach to every wrong and error a measured inevitable penalty, to every rightness and prudence an assured reward—penalty of which the remittance cannot be purchased, and reward of which the promise cannot be broken.

Before this Great Being, whose "eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good," we must be real, for He sees us through and through,—sees us exactly as we are,—sees all that we have done, all that we are doing, knows all the blessings we have received, and the use which we have made of them,—knows all the follies we have committed, all our weak yielding to temptation, all our base indulgence in what we knew to be wrong,—but knows also, blessed be His Name! all our sincere endeavours to do what is right and good and true, to overcome our besetting evil, to cast out our bosom sin,—and who, in His Infinite Mercy and Wisdom, will take account of all. Does "faith" such as this tend to "make void the Law"?

(ii) But we teach you further to believe that this God, this Living God, is your very Father,—that though it is indeed "a fearful thing to fall into His Hands" for judg-

ment, yet they are still a Father's Hands, the Hands of One who loves His children, with a love of which our love to our children is but a faint forthshadowing. We would have you realise the awful fact that He has made you in His own image, with powers and faculties by which you may know Him, serve Him, love Him, glorify Him,—that He has made you for Himself, and by all His wondrous providences is seeking to bring you nearer to Himself, to beget in you that childlike spirit, which mingles a joyous trust, a glorious hope, with a reverential fear,—which will make you shudder and shrink and turn away with holy hatred from the thought of sin, not because you dread the sure inevitable penalty, the fatherly chastisement, for evil-doing in this world or in the next, but because you cannot bear the thought of losing even for a moment the light of your Father's Countenance, of losing your hold, as it were, upon His Hand, and you thankfully welcome every revelation of that Presence, whether in the past or in the present, whether in mercy or in judgment, which helps you to realise it more vividly and constantly. Does a "faith" like this "make void" the Law?

(iii) For, thirdly, we teach you to trust in the Living God, who is not only, as He is styled in the Bible, your faithful Creator, your Father and Friend, but as such is continually revealing Himself more and more clearly and fully to His children, who is teaching now the obedient heart,—not *silent*, and referring us only to a document,—not *absent*, and communicating with us only by a letter,—not delegating His authority to any one over our consciences,—not interposing Church or Priesthood between our souls and His Blessed Presence,—but dwelling in us by His Word, speaking with us by His Spirit, saying daily to each of us, 'My son! My daughter! give me thy heart.' We teach you to believe that He has made us expressly for this Divine communion,—not like the brutes that perish, but spiritual beings, with spiritual powers, with deep desires and inward longings, which reach beyond this present world and the bounds of time, and which He, who has kindled them, means to satisfy with Himself, in part here, as a pledge that He will do so more fully hereafter. We teach you that in every man this revelation of God is going on continually,—that the law of God is written on the heart of every one of us by the finger of our Great Creator, and light

is daily given us, more or less freely given, according to the good pleasure of His Will, and according to the use which we have made of that already given us, that we may read the record—and that He holds us all responsible for using it.

(iv) But we believe further that our God, the Living God, now present with us as our Father and Friend, now daily and hourly revealing Himself to the hearts of His children, is the “same yesterday, today, and for ever,”—the God of our fathers, as He is our God, and as He will be the God of our children after us,—that He has been revealing Himself to the great human family all along, from the moment when reason dawned in the first human being, down to the present day. ‘At sundry times and in divers manners,’ has He spoken in times past to the fathers by the Prophets,—not the fathers and prophets of the Hebrew race only, but of every nation under heaven,—giving each nation its special gifts and its special work, for the carrying out of the great scheme of His Providence. India and Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, Greece and Rome, each in its own sphere, have contributed their share towards the general progress, have done their part, as God willed it, in advancing the education of mankind. But the Hebrew race above all others has been quickened from the first with higher spiritual life, and endowed with special gifts for the purpose of propagating that life to others. Throughout the Scriptures this wonderful power is exhibited, by which, with a few simple words, the springs of life within our own hearts are touched, and the whole inner man is stirred, and we “taste the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” We teach you to believe that God has endowed us with the power of speech that we may impart to one another, and multiply thus a thousandfold, the “spiritual gifts,” which He bestows upon each for the good of all; and that He has blessed us also with the discovery of the art of writing, and later still of printing, by which the thoughts of other ages may come down to our own, and satisfy us that it is one and the selfsame Spirit that teaches us all. We thus receive joyfully the lessons which the past has handed down to us, in the writings of gifted spirits of other nations beyond the pale of Jewish History, in the teachings of prophets and apostles, and above all, in the recorded words of truth, which fell from the lips of the Son of Man. For we believe—nay, we know and feel—that in each living word of truth,

whether in the Bible or out of the Bible, that finds us out in our inner man, there is a Message from God to the soul. Do we thus make void the Law by faith—even the written Law, the Scriptures—much less that Law, to which St. Paul is more distinctly referring in the text, Law in the abstract, the Eternal Law, which in all such Divine utterances is brought home to our hearts, and binds our consciences?

(v) But, further, we teach that God has revealed Himself not only by means of spoken or written words, but by the acts of living men, above all, in the life and death of Jesus our Lord,—that in him, the true, the pure, the holy, the loving one, men saw the glory of God, the glory of the Father who dwelt in him,—that in his holy hatred against sin, he showed forth the Father's Displeasure,—in his compassion for the sinner he exhibited the Father's Mercy,—in his suffering and dying, he gave the plainest evidence of the Father's Love, by whose spirit he was strengthened to 'lay down his life for his brethren,' to suffer the cruel death of the cross as the earthly reward of his lifelong ministry, and by this death, by the Divine Love which it manifested, to seal the work of his life, and open to us the kingdom of heaven.

Is this a faith which makes void the Law? Yea, it is one which establishes the Law. For it teaches us that we too through trial and suffering must be made perfect, as he was,—that we too must be ready to take up the cross, if we would follow our Lord,—that, if the dear Son of God in his life and death has shown forth the Father's Love to us, we must be willing to tread the path which he has trodden,—must be content, like him, not to seek our own, our own glory, enjoyment, ease, in this world, our own peace and comfort in body or soul, which God will give to us, in the path of duty, as He sees best,—but to seek our Father's Glory and the good of Man,—to desire that our Father's work may be done by us, His Will be wrought in us, through whatever painful discipline we may have to pass,—to be ready to lose our life here, or what makes life sweet to us, at our Father's Word, that is, in obedience to the truth, in defence of the right, in the discharge of duty, without looking for a reward but in His smile, and the calm of an approving conscience, yet knowing that, in so losing it, we shall "save it unto Life Eternal."





